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ABSTRACT

A French listening comprehension test administered to all grade 8 students taking core French in Ottawa schools is described. The test consists of 55 multiple choice questions which are heard along with preliminary descriptive material on a cassette recording. Part one requires students to hear a sentence and then decide which of four drawings best illustrates its meaning. The second part requires students to listen to a sentence and identify the time of action. Part three tests recognition of French sounds. Part four requires students to listen to a recorded passage and then answer a question with four possible answers. The French comprehension test was administered to 1,209 students in May 1982. Results indicate that most students seem to understand basic French vocabulary and to receive ideas presented in simple and direct sentences. They have difficulty when information is indirect or presented using structures which do not have direct English equivalents. In listening to longer passages, simple sentences were well understood but detailed information or complex sentences were not well understood. Individual scores tended to improve with increased number of years spent in the core program. It is concluded that the test functions well in providing an assessment of listening skills of grade 8 students. (RW)

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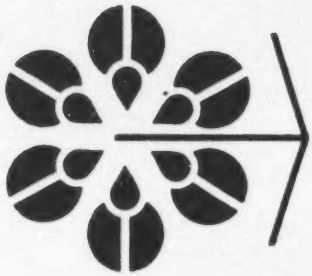

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Testing the French Listening Comprehension of Grade 8 English Program Students

Margaret Wightman

August, 1982

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RESEARCH REPORT 82-07

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INTRODUCTION

In May 1982, a test of French listening comprehension was given to all grade 8 students taking Core French in Ottawa Board of Education (OBE) schools. The test was developed by the OBE Research Centre and is based on the local curriculum. It is designed to be given in a classroom using a cassette recording, test booklets and answer sheets. This report contains a description of the test and the results from its initial use.

BACKGROUND

The majority of OBE students at elementary grade levels are enrolled in the regular English stream which includes an element of French language instruction. For 40 minutes each day (30 minutes in kindergarten) these students are taught a program known as Core French. Communicative skills are emphasized and until the end of grade 6 the program is highly oral in nature. In grades 7 and 8 more time is spent on reading and writing and the proposed OBE course outline suggests that, at this level, 30% of the mark be based on written work. The Core French Program used in OBE schools follows the Ontario Ministry of Education guideline[1] very closely while at the same time reflecting some special characteristics of the national capital region.

The test being described in this report is one of a series prepared for the OBE Core French program by the Research Centre in consultation with the French Coordinator and Consultant. The first of the series was a listening comprehension test given in the spring of 1980 to students in grade 6. (OBE Research Report 80-07). A year later the next cohort of grade 6 students received a revised version of the test. This instrument was reconstructed in two parts so that one section (Subtest A) was based on material from the fourth or earlier grades while the other section (Subtest B) was based mainly on grades 5 and 6

[1] French, Core Programs 1980, Curriculum Guideline for the Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior Divisions, Ontario Ministry of Education.

curriculum content. (OBE Research Report 81-10.) The French listening comprehension test developed in 1982 and being reported here is intended to be a sequel to the earlier two subtests. It is based on the Core French Program for grades 7 and 8 and is labelled Subtest C.

The other aspect of the Core French program being evaluated is speaking skills. An instrument for this purpose was developed in 1980 and administered to about 25 percent of the grade 6 Core French students using a matrix sampling method. (OBE Research Report 80-05.) In the spring of 1982 the same speaking test was given to a sample of grade 8 students which included all those from the 1980 sample still attending OBE schools. (OBE Research Report 82-08.)

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEST

The French listening comprehension test for grade 8 students is intended to be administered to a class of students by the regular French teacher. The test consists of 55 multiple-choice questions which are heard along with some preliminary descriptive material from a cassette recording. Both male and female voices are used. Testees receive a test booklet which contains a written copy of the instructions heard from the recording, visual material needed for certain test items and the four possible responses for each question. Answer sheets suitable for automated marking are also handed to the students.

An outline of the test contents and the corresponding recording time for each part is given in Table 1. Although the test itself may be played in 38 minutes, the total administration time would be about 45 to 50 minutes allowing for filling in identifying information on the answer sheet and answering questions about the instructions preceding each part. The portion of each item which is only heard and not printed in the test booklet is given twice.

TABLE 1

OUTLINE OF THE FRENCH COMPREHENSION TEST

SUBTEST C FOR GRADE 8 CORE STUDENTS

Part	Content	No. of Items	Time in Minutes *	Pages
1	Sentences - recognition of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, verb phrases, singular vs plural forms, masculine vs feminine forms.	14	7	6
2	Time of action - verbs in present, future (futur simple et futur proche) and past (passé composé et imparfait).	14	5	2
3	Sound discrimination - nouns with and without articles.	8	6	3
4	Passages and Social situations - sentences, conversations and descriptions are followed by one to four questions.	19	20	8
TOTAL		55	38	19

* Recording time only.

The content of the test is based on the OBE and the Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines for the Core French Program up to grade 8 with particular emphasis on the material introduced at the intermediate grade levels. A variety of question types is used in order to evaluate several different aspects of listening skills. A description of the format employed for each part of the test follows. More information about individual items is included in the section of this report dealing with results.

The type of question used for Part 1 of Subtest C is also found in Subtests A and B. Students hear a sentence from the recording and are asked to determine which of four drawings best illustrates its meaning. Each of the 14 sentences in Part 1 is designed to test a different language component drawn from the curriculum and not already represented in Subtests A or B.

The second part of the test requires students to listen to a sentence and then identify the time of the action as present, past or future. Time in the past is expressed in the *passé composé* or *imparfait* forms and the future in *futur simple* or *futur proche*. Most of the items were included in the first version of the grade 6 listening comprehension test (1980) but this section was omitted from the second version (1981). The reason for exclusion from the revised test was that the Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines, published after the 1980 test was used, did not include the two tenses *imparfait* and *futur simple* in the program for junior level students (grades 4 to 6). Also, the OBE students tested in 1980 found this section quite difficult, especially items testing the two verb forms just mentioned.

Part 3 consists of eight items intended to test recognition of French sounds. For each question an illustration is given in the test booklet and the student chooses the matching name from amongst four words or short expressions very similar in sound.

The fourth part of the test is the longest. Students listen to a recorded passage and then hear a question about it along with four possible answers. The question and alternative responses are printed in the test booklet whereas the descriptive part of the question is only presented orally. The preliminary passages range in length from one simple sentence to a description given in 10 sentences, some of which are quite lengthy and complex. The longer passages are followed by several questions.

ADMINISTRATION

The French Comprehension Test, Subtest C, was given to 1209 OBE students in the grade 8 Core French program during the period from May 4th to 11th, 1982. The distribution, collection and marking of material related to the test was handled by City-Wide Testing. Notices and instructions about preliminary preparations were sent to principals and teachers about three weeks in advance of testing. The actual test materials and complete instructions for each French teacher arrived at the schools 4 days before the testing period. (A copy of these instructions is included in Appendix A.) Since the test required more time than a normal Core French period the teachers were advised to arrange an extension of class time or to give the test in two parts. Included in the package sent to teachers was a form for them to complete with information about each student's background in French. Specifically teachers were asked to indicate the student's program in French at each grade level and languages spoken at home. The collection of this type of information was initiated by the school principals in 1980.

As the completed tests were returned to City-Wide Testing they were marked school by school and the results sent to the school concerned immediately. When the material from all the schools had been received the results for the board as a whole were calculated and a report was sent to the principals and Core French teachers in early June.

ANALYSIS

The test analysis program used at OBE Computing Services produced reports for each school and for the board as a whole. Both types of report contain item responses for individual students, the percentage of items answered correctly by each student and the group mean. On the basis of data from all schools, the difficulty level (overall percentage of correct answers) and the discrimination index for each item was produced and the test reliability calculated.

An SPSS program was used with the test analysis program data records to produce statistics for each section of the test, for each sex and for the groups of students classified by their background in French. Also examined were the results for students whose mother tongue was neither English nor French and students in the enriched program. The same program was used to perform tests of significance on group differences.

RESULTS

The overall mean on Subtest C of the French Comprehension Test was 32.8 out of a possible 55 points or 60%. The standard deviation was 8.9. Table 2 shows these figures as well as the mean, standard deviation and reliability for each of the four parts of this test. The percentage of correct responses indicates that recognizing French sounds (Part 3) and the meaning of sentences (Part 1) were the easiest tasks on the test. The most difficult group of items (Part 4) involved understanding conversations, directions and longer passages. Recognition of time as indicated by verbs (Part 3) was also somewhat difficult.

The Kuder-Richardson formula was used to calculate reliability. The value of 0.87 is reasonably high for a test of this type and length. The reliabilities of the four parts of the test are considerably lower as would be expected with fewer items. Part 3 has the lowest value because it contains only eight items and because these items are relatively easy.

TABLE 2

FRENCH COMPREHENSION TEST RESULTS - SUBTEST C, MAY 1982

Section	No. of Items	Mean	Percent Correct	Std. Dev.	Reliability
Part 1	14	10.0	71.5	2.6	0.65
Part 2	14	7.6	54.5	3.1	0.70
Part 3	8	6.3	79.1	1.5	0.54
Part 4	19	8.9	46.6	3.8	0.75
TOTAL	55	32.8	59.7	8.9	0.87

The difficulty (or percentage of correct responses) of each item on the test based on the 1209 students was indicated on a summary of the results sent to each school. A copy of this report may be found in Appendix B. This was prepared to allow teachers in each school to compare the performance of their students to the board-wide norm. The same figures are repeated in the next 4 tables, but the items have been rearranged according to their testing objectives.

The results of Part 1 are presented in Table 3 where the key words for recognizing the correct answers are underlined. The overall mean of 72% is shown at the bottom of the table. With so few sentences in each grouping, comparisons among the types of vocabulary tested cannot be made with confidence. However, the results shown for the first six groupings in Table 3 do indicate that individual words typical of the grade 8 Core French students' vocabulary are reasonably well known and are recognized in a simple sentence. It appears that students are not as competent in recognizing the distinction between singular and plural or masculine and feminine forms of vocabulary. The last two groups of items which focused on this skill have an overall mean of 65% which is lower than the mean for the rest of Part 1.

TABLE 3

VOCABULARY AND SYNTAX TESTED IN PART 1

Component Tested	Item Number	Sentence	Percent Correct
Nouns	2.	Les étudiants sont à la bibliothèque.	95
	6.	Voici ce que nous avons acheté à la pâtisserie.	75
	12.	Nancy obtient une bonne note de son professeur.	76
Adjectives	9.	Il y a des jeunes qui sont très paresseux le samedi matin.	50
	10.	Le plus petit enfant est un Américain.	62
Adverbs	1.*	Le vieil homme a mal au dos.	89
	3.	J'ai trop de vêtements dans le tiroir.	73
Prepositions	4.	Le veau est à côté de la vache.	73
	14.	Le voyageur a laissé ses valises sur le banc.	67
Verb	8.	Après le souper, Serge essuie la vaisselle.	61
Expressions with avoir	1.	Le vieil homme a mal au dos.	89
	11.	Après le combat, les boxeurs ont chaud.	86
Singular-plural distinction	5.	Elles ont perdu le ballon.	69
	7.*	Vos nouvelles amies sont très belles.	66
	13.	Le bébé s'amuse avec une balle et des blocs.	59
Masculine-feminine distinction	7.*	Vos nouvelles amies sont très belles.	66
	10.	Le plus petit enfant est un Américain.	62
Overall Percent Correct			72

* Sentence appears more than once in this table.

The results of testing for recognition of past, present or future time are given in Table 4. The overall mean for the 14 items is 55%. Students have the greatest difficulty recognizing the past when *imparfait* is used, followed by the future expressed by the *futur simple* tense. Both the present and the future expressed as *futur proche* were quite well recognized and 57% of the sentences in the past using the *passé composé* were identified correctly. Beside the figures based on the 1982 test of grade 8 students the results of testing 1243 grade 6 students in 1980 are given for items appearing in both tests. The scores of the grade 8 students were consistently higher than those of the grade 6 and the overall mean based on the items used both years was 50% in 1980 and 58% in 1982.

Table 5 gives an outline of Part 3 of the test indicating the object(s) seen in the test booklet and the four sounds heard. The overall mean for these items is 79%. The grade 8 Core French students appear to have little difficulty in recognizing the correct sound for most words. The exception was confusion between *dessert*, the correct answer for item 33 chosen by 42% of the testees, and *désert*, the distractor chosen by 38%. The only difference in the pronunciation of the two words is in the "s" or "z" sound. Since the English equivalent uses the "z" sound it is likely this interference led to the low score. It is interesting to note that in item 35 only 11% chose *le pin* while 74% chose the correct *les pins*. This suggests that most students are able to distinguish the singular and plural forms in isolated words, whereas the results of Part 1 indicated there was some difficulty when the critical words for such a distinction were embedded in sentences.

TABLE 4

TIME OF ACTION TESTED IN PART 2

Time	Item Number	Sentence	1982 Results For Grade 8 Percent Correct (N=1209)	1982 Results For Grade 8 Mean	1980 Results For Grade 6 Percent Correct (N=1243)	1980 Results For Grade 6 Mean
Past - (passé composé)						
	21.	Le chien a mangé l'os.	60		48	
	23.	Il n'a pas appris sa leçon.	54		47	
	27.	Le touriste a vu la ville.	56		43	
				57		46
- (imparfait)						
	22.	Il jouait au football tous les jours.	33		31	
	25.	Il faisait chaud avec ce manteau.	28			
				31		31
Present						
	15.	Il travaille fort.	77		69	
	18.	Le garçon reçoit une nouvelle bicyclette.	58		49	
	20.	La souris sort de son trou.	67		65	
	28.	Savez-vous les règles du jeu d'échecs?	53			
				64		
				67*		61
Future - (proche)						
	16.	Paul va organiser une soirée.	66		53	
	26.	Il va repartir après la tempête.	67		62	
				67		58
- (simple)						
	17.	Le professeur chantera pendant le spectacle.	45			
	19.	Nous servirons un repas italien.	45		41	
	24.	Jeanne vendra ses livres.	54		38	
				48		
				50*		40
Overall Percent Correct				55		
				58*		50

* Based on items used both years.

TABLE 5

SOUND DISCRIMINATION TESTED IN PART 3

Item Number	Sketch	Sounds	Percent Correct
29.	bread	paix, peine, <u>pain</u>, panne	80
30.	bird cage	caisse, cache, case, <u>cage</u>	87
31.	bonfire	fée, <u>feu</u>, fou, fait	93
32.	2 eggs	<u>les oeufs</u>, les yeux, les cieux, les sous	88
33.	ice cream sundae	<u>dessert</u>, désert, des soeurs, dix heures	42
34.	salt shaker	sale, <u>sel</u>, seule, sol	79
35.	3 pine trees	lapin, lopin, le pin, <u>les pins</u>	74
36.	4 hands	dûment, démant, <u>des mains</u>, demain	90
Overall			79

The results of the last part of the test are given in Table 6. Also included is a count of the number of sentences in the passage preceding the questions. The positioning in the table indicates the sequencing of passages and questions; for instance, questions 45 to 47 followed a weather report which was four sentences in length. Each item is described here by giving the gist of the query in English. The actual wording of each question in the test is given in the summary of results in Appendix B. The text of the passages and alternate responses are not included in this report.

The performance of students was generally poorer for Part 4 than any other part of the test. Since the vocabulary and format of these items were quite varied it is likely that several factors contributed to the students' difficulties. Each item was examined individually to try to determine the reason for the incorrect replies and thus the nature of students' confusion or lack of knowledge.

Items 37 and 40 both required recognition of an appropriate conversational expression for a particular situation. The responses sought were "*felicitations*" at a graduation and "*Comme c'est malheureux*" after a car accident. Item 39 was also social in the nature of the incident described, that of being invited to a concert but being unable to go. It appears that the main difficulty in answering questions 38 and 41 was caused by the pronoun objects *les* and *en* preceding the verb. Although the vocabulary used for the first five items of Part 4 does not seem to be difficult some of the incorrect answers may have been caused by not recognizing the meaning of *diplôme (37)*, *emprunter (38)*, *démolie* and *consoler (40)* or *vitrine* and *rétire (41)*.

The questions numbered 42 to 44, following the conversation about a camping trip, were answered relatively well with an overall mean of 60%. In examining the response rate for each of the three incorrect answers for these questions (not reported here) it can be seen that students are much more apt to choose a

TABLE 6

USE OF LANGUAGE TESTED IN PART 4

Item No.	Sentences in passage	Topic	Percent Correct
Passages with single questions			
37	1	At graduation what is an appropriate salutation?	36
38	2	How many records does Marc borrow?	46
39	2	Does Paul accept an invitation to the concert?	44
40	2	What is said to a friend whose car has been badly damaged?	41
41	2	How many stereos are left in the shop window?	42
Passages followed by several questions			
	7	Conversation about camping trip	
42		How long is the trip?	53
43		Where will they sleep?	57
44		How will they travel?	70
	4	Weather report	
45		What is the weather like now?	41
46		What will it be like late afternoon?	45
47		What is happening to the thermometer?	39
	10	Description of Naismith and origins of basketball	
48		Where was Naismith born?	79
49		Who actually invented basketball?	26
50		Who decided the height of the baskets?	64
51		How was Naismith honoured?	64

. . . continued

TABLE 6 (cont.)

USE OF LANGUAGE TESTED IN PART 4

Item No.	Sentences in passage	Topic	Percent Correct
Map with short descriptions followed by single questions			
52	7	Following a route from the station, where did the student spend his first night?	27
53	3	Going from the theatre, where did he eat?	21
54	3	At which street corner did he meet his friend?	27
55	2	How did he go from the bank to the station?	66
Overall			47

response which contains some of the same words used in the passage. This phenomenon has been noticed in other items as well, so it suggests that sometimes students recognize and remember sounds when they have not grasped the full meaning.

The next group of questions (items 45 to 47) followed a weather report which appears to have been somewhat difficult to understand. Likely this passage contained too much detailed and technical information to be fully comprehended or retained in its entirety. It appears that verbs used in the forecast were often not recognized as being in the future tense. Also it seems that students did not make the necessary association between passage and response of such ideas as *le mercure descendra* and *le thermomètre va baisser* or *les températures deviendront plus froides* and *le temps se refroidera.*

The passage about basketball was much longer but also of a less intense and more descriptive nature. It was answered quite well with the exception of item 49. In this case the information needed to answer the question correctly was imbedded in quite a long sentence in the middle of the passage. Here again it appears that the students were unable to handle ideas which were closely packed and somewhat indirect in presentation. Once again, the response incorrectly chosen by 60% of the students contained an excerpt from the passage.

The last four items of the test required the students to use a simplified map sketched in the test booklet. These items were not answered well. It is possible that part of the difficulty here was in map-use but the responses also suggest the expressions used which are typical for giving directions were unfamiliar. In item 52 *traverse la rue* seems often to have been interpreted as "going along the street" rather than "crossing the street". In number 53

il va tout droit seems to have been understood by over 40% of the respondents as "turning right" and in number 54 the majority of students did not use *bout* in *jusqu'au bout de la rue.* The last question, number 55, was answered correctly by 66% of the students, but it did not employ any such precise expressions and was also made somewhat easier by the lay-out of the map.

The data was examined for a difference on the basis of sex. The results of this analysis, shown in Table 7, indicates that the girls do tend to have higher scores than boys and that this difference is significant at the 99 percent level for the overall test mean. Such differences are not surprising as they have been seen frequently in OBE and other French testing programs.

TABLE 7

RESULTS PRESENTED BY SEX

Section of Test	Boys		Girls	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
	(*N*= 592)		(*N*= 591)	
Part 1	9.8	2.7	10.2**	2.4
Part 2	7.4	3.1	7.8*	3.0
Part 3	6.2	1.5	6.4**	1.4
Part 4	8.7	3.9	9.1*	3.7
OVERALL	32.1	9.1	33.6**	8.5

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Using information obtained from Core French teachers the students were divided into groups based on their French language background. As seen in Table 8 the mean score rises with added experience in French. The highest mean score was obtained by the group labelled "Extra French", whose members use French at home or have attended French schools or French immersion courses. Next is the group who have studied Core French for the full 9 years, closely followed by the group in Core French for 6-8 years. Tests for the significance of differences amongst the five groups with known backgrounds showed that although the difference between the first and second group was not significant, all other differences were. The level of significance of these differences was 99% for all pairs except groups 3 and 4 for which it was 95%.

TABLE 8

RESULTS PRESENTED BY LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Group	Background	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	9 yrs. Core French	504	32.6	8.0
2	6 - 8 yrs. Core Fr.	195	32.0	7.7
3	3 - 5 yrs. Core Fr.	125	29.3	7.7
4	1 - 2 yrs. Core Fr.	54	26.3	7.9
5	Extra French	214	39.0	9.1
6	Uncertain	117	30.4	9.3
ALTOGETHER		1,209	32.8	8.2

It should be cautioned that the records used for these groupings did not always agree with those collected for the same purpose in 1980. Although corrections were made where possible and students were placed in the "Uncertain" group, if conflicting background information could not be resolved, it is still possible that the data used was not completely accurate. Since no entries on the information sheet would indicate a full Core program, one suspects that this option (Group 1) includes students who actually started the program after kindergarten.

On the form used to collect information about French language background, the teachers were also asked to indicate if a language other than English or French was spoken at home. The test mean was calculated for this group of 155 third language students and found to be 31.8 which did not differ significantly from the mean of 33.0 for the remaining students. When the third language group is subdivided according to the background groupings as shown in Table 9, an interesting result emerges. Whereas third language students who have been in Core French for three or more years score as high as the students from English backgrounds, the third language students who have been in Core French for 1 or 2 years have much lower scores. When the scores for each part of the test are obtained for these groups as shown in Table 10, it appears that the students with a foreign language have particular difficulty during their first few years in French in distinguishing sounds as tested in Part 3. They are also less able than the English background students to understand the meaning of simple sentences given in French. The third language students who have had 6 or more years in Core French seem to have greater facility than the English and French background students in recognizing the time expressed by verbs as tested in Part 2. This may be indicative of a greater facility to make use of French grammar.

The grade 8 students tested included 115 who were enrolled in an enriched program which included 60 minutes of daily instruction in French instead of the

TABLE 9

RESULTS FOR THIRD LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Group No.	Background	Eng./Fr. N	Eng./Fr. Mean	3rd Lang. N	3rd Lang. Mean
1	9 yrs. Core French	445	32.4	59	34.2
2	6-8 yrs. Core French	162	31.6	33	34.0
3	3-5 yrs. Core French	105	29.3	20	29.2
4	1-2 yrs. Core French	31	28.5	23	23.4*
5	Extra French	202	39.2	12	36.2
6	Uncertain	109	30.5	8	29.4
	Overall	1054	33.0	155	31.8

* $p < 0.01$

TABLE 10

RESULTS FOR THIRD LANGUAGE STUDENTS

ON EACH PART OF THE TEST

Group No.	PART 1		PART 2		PART 3		PART 4	
	Eng./Fr.	3rd Lang.	Eng./Fr.	3rd Lang.	Eng./Fr.	3rd Lang.	Eng./Fr.	3rd Lang.
1	10.1	10.4	7.4	8.4*	6.4	6.3	8.6	9.2
2	9.5	10.4	7.5	8.5	6.3	6.3	8.2	8.8
3	9.0	9.1	7.0	6.6	6.0	5.7	7.3	7.8
4	8.9	6.7**	6.5	6.1	5.4	3.8**	7.7	6.8
5	11.5	11.7	9.1	8.9	6.9	6.3	11.6	9.3
6	9.5	8.4	6.7	6.9	6.3	5.1	7.9	9.0
Over-all	10.1	9.7	7.6	7.8	6.4	5.8**	8.9	8.6

** $p < .01$
* $p < .05$

usual 40 minutes. The overall test mean for this group of very academically able students was 43 out of 55, or 78%, which was substantially higher than the mean score for the whole group.

DISCUSSION OF THE TEST

The main purpose in constructing and using the French Comprehension Test was to assess the general level of listening skills of OBE grade 8 students who had followed the Core French program. Such information is of particular interest to those involved in the design and implementation of the program. The test should also be of value to teachers in allowing them to determine the standing of any class relative to all OBE schools. In addition, class weaknesses can be spotted by comparing class and board means for each item. Using a student's

item responses, teachers can also identify problems on an individual basis.

The OBE Core French program for grades 7 and 8 consists of a prescribed program of grammar and sentence structures, and only these were used for the test. A basic vocabulary is defined for each year's study until the end of grade 6. In grades 7 and 8 each teacher chooses topics for study from a list of suggestions. This may result in some variation among classes in the new vocabulary acquired in the intermediate grades. The effect of such differences in topics on test results should be very slight however since all the vocabulary used on the test was very general, in common usage and within the range expected for basic functioning in French. The test was scrutinized by OBE specialists in this field and judged to be appropriate for grade 8 Core students.

Discrimination indices were calculated for the French Listening Test and are given in Appendix C. These values provide an indication of how well an item differentiates between high and low scoring students, in this case between the upper one-third and the lower one-third of the testees. The index is actually the difference between the mean scores of these two groups for the particular item. Thus, the discrimination index is related to the item difficulty with the maximum possible value greatest for an item answered correctly by 50 percent and least for an item answered correctly by either 0 or 100 percent. As a rough guide Ebel[1] suggests that a value of 40 or more shows that an item is very good, of 30 that the item is quite good but could be improved and of 18 or less that the item should be rejected or revised.

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[1] Ebel, Robert L., Essentials of Educational Measurement, 1972, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, (p.399).

In examining the discrimination indices for this test, the four items with means over 88 percent were not considered because of the severe restriction of the maximum possible value. The mean for the other 51 indices is 35 which is reasonably high. The mean indices for the four parts of the test are 36,42, 28 and 38. Here it is seen that Part 3 of the test focusing on sound recognition is the least discriminating but this might be expected since the mean score of 79 percent would have a maximum possible discrimination index of 42 which is lower than that of the other three parts of the test.

Only three items on the test had discrimination indices of 18 or less and these were numbers 22, 25 and 53 with indices of 16, 10 and 14. The mean scores for these items were 33, 28 and 21. The first two of these items were in Part 2 and involved the *imparfait* tense while the third non-discriminating item involved the expression *tout droit*. In all three cases both the high and low scoring students gave many incorrect answers indicating a common difficulty.

As mentioned previously, a subsample of 337 of the students tested also were given a test of French speaking. Correlation coeffecients were calculated between each of the 15 questions on the speaking test and the listening test scores. These coefficients ranged from 0.15 to 0.44 showing there was a positive though not terribly strong relationship between the students' performances on the two tests (see OBE Research Report 82-08, Table 6, page 16). On the basis of the same subsample the intercorrelations among the four parts of the listening test ranged from 0.74 to 0.94 showing a much higher degree of association.

CONCLUSION

The French Comprehension Test given to the grade 8 Core students has provided the following impressions of their listening skills. Most students seem to have understanding of a basic French vocabulary and are quite adept at recognizing and distinguishing sounds typical of the language. They appear able to receive ideas presented in simple and direct sentences but difficulty is encountered when information is indirect or presented using structures which do not have direct equivalents in English. Markers for gender, number and some verb tenses are not always recognized. In listening to longer passages, simple sentences were understood quite well but there was difficulty with information which was detailed or given in fairly extended or complex sentences. Some idioms and social expressions also seemed rather unfamiliar.

Analyses based on individual characteristics show that scores on the test generally improve with increasing number of years spent in the Core program. Students from a home where a third language is spoken seem to have more difficulties than their English language peers during the first few years of Core French but after several years in the program differences in performance of these two groups seem to disappear.

The test itself appears to function fairly well in providing an assessment of the listening skills of the grade 8 students. Nevertheless, some modifications should result in a better instrument.

Appendix A

Directions for Administering the Test

ADMINISTRATION DIRECTIONS

FOR THE O.B.E. FRENCH COMPREHENSION TEST

SUBTEST C - GRADE 8 CORE

Preparations to be done now

1. Find the packing slip and follow the instructions to determine that you have received sufficient materials.

2. Decide on a schedule for testing each group of students.

The test will take 39 minutes if there are no interruptions (to answer students' questions). An additional 5 to 8 minutes are required for students to enter information on the answer sheet.

If the normal periods in your school are less than 50 minutes the following suggestions are made in order of preference.

1. Arrange to have the class period extended to 50 minutes, preferably by starting the period earlier than usual.

2. Have the students fill in the answer sheets during a period before the test is given. Collect the prepared answer sheets.

3. Divide the test so that in the first period answer sheets are prepared and the first three parts (all on side A of the cassette) are given. All the material must then be collected to be redistributed in a second period when the remaining part of the test is given.

The table below shows how the test is divided.

SUBTEST C

SECTION	ITEM NOS.	RECORDING TIME	CASSETTE SIDE
Part 1	1 to 14	7 mins	A
Part 2	15 to 28	6 mins	A
Part 3	29 to 36	6 mins	A
Part 4	37 to 55	20 mins	B

3. For each test administration period be sure to have available:

(a) A cassette player. This must be in good working order and with sufficient volume so that all students in the room can hear well. In some situations an extension cord will be required to best position the player.

(b) A suitable room. This room must:
- have desks or tables for writing;
- be large enough to comfortably accommodate all students;
- be quiet (only students taking the test should be in the room at that time);
- allow the cassette recording to be heard clearly;
- have an electrical outlet for the cassette player.

(c) Plans for split classes. Alternative arrangements must be made for students not in grade 8 because they must not write the test. If there are grade 8 students in two split classes, you may wish to group them together for the test periods. This may be done at your own arrangement, provided that no more than about 32 students are taking the test at the same time.

(d) Two sharpened HB pencils and an eraser for each student during each test period.

Instructions for the day of testing

Before students enter the room (if possible):

4. Position tape recorder in the room so that all children can hear well.

5. Insert cassette and advance the recording to the beginning of the part of the test to be used. You will hear the words "OBE French Comprehension Test, Subtest C", followed by the part number.

When students are seated:

6. Make sure each child has 2 sharpened HB pencils and an eraser.

7. Distribute one answer sheet to each student. Tell the student to turn the answer sheet sideways and enter the following information. (This may be done prior to or at the first testing session).

SCHOOL _____ CITY (Name of homeroom teacher) _____

INSTRUCTOR (Name of French teacher) _____ GRADE ___ TEST (OBE French)

NAME should be printed in the section on the right, LAST NAME first (start in the first box), FIRST NAME in section indicated (there is room for only 6 letters of the first name), Middle initial.
DARKEN ONE LETTER BOX DIRECTLY UNDER EACH LETTER OF THE NAME.

In lower right section, ignore the first 6 columns and enter only the following information and DARKEN THE APPROPRIATE BOXES UNDERNEATH:

GRADE (darken 8)
BIRTHDATE (darken space under month and the last two digits of year of birth)
SEX (boy or girl)

8. Distribute the test booklet to each student. Tell students not to open the test booklet until directed to do so by the tape.

9. When everybody is ready, start the tape. The speaker will read the directions as printed on the cover sheet of the booklet, while the students read them silently. At the point where the speaker asks "Are there any questions?", stop the tape and answer any questions the students may have. Now begin the tape again. Note that each of the four parts is preceded by directions including a point at which students may ask questions.

The tapes have been spot-checked for audio quality. However, if you should find the recording of your cassette has been faulty, stop the test and call City-Wide Testing (563-2421) to obtain another cassette. When the tape is finished make sure the students put down their pencils.

10. At the end of each test session, collect all the test booklets and the answer sheets. After the entire test has been administered, place the completed class information sheet with the answer sheets for that class in the envelope provided.

11. When testing is finished for all grade 8 (core French) classes in the school, <u>return all</u> the materials immediately to City-Wide Testing. The scoring will be done as the tests are received and the results sent back to the schools as soon as possible.

    Please call the OBE Delivery Service (563-2493) to arrange for return of cartons to:

    CITY-WIDE TESTING
    662 LYON STREET
    Room 319

Appendix B

The Summary Report For Schools

O.B.E. FRENCH COMPREHENSION TEST, SUBTEST C

Ottawa Grade 8 percentile norms: May 1982

Based on 1209 pupils, in Grade 8, core French, tested in May 1982

Percentile	Raw Score
99	49 - 55
95	45 - 48
90	41 - 44
80	37 - 40
70	34 - 36
60	32 - 33
50	29 - 31
40	27 - 28
30	25 - 26
20	22 - 24
10	19 - 21
5	15 - 18
1	0 - 14

Mean Raw Score (O.B.E. average):	32.7
Standard Deviation:	8.8

A percentile refers to the percentage of pupils in a given reference group (in this case, all Grade 8 pupils in core French in O.B.E.) who have scores the same as or less than a particular pupil's score. Percentiles range from 1 to 99. For example, a pupil who attains the score of 33 on the test has performed as well as or better than 60 percent of the pupils in O.B.E. Grade 6, core French.

The norms are based on all grade 8 pupils in core French who took the test (n = 1209) regardless of their French backgrounds.

OBE FRENCH COMPREHENSION TEST

Summary of Content and Results for Grade 8 students tested in 1982

SUBTEST C

No.	Test content	Percent Correct O.B.E.	School
	Part 1.- Sentences. The student is asked to indicate which of four sketches best illustrates the meaning of the sentence heard.		
1.	Le vieil homme a mal au dos.....	89	____
2.	Les étudiants sont à la bibliothèque.....	95	____
3.	J'ai trop de vêtements dans le tiroir.....	73	____
4.	Le veau est à côté de la vache.....	73	____
5.	Elles ont perdu le ballon.....	69	____
6.	Voici ce que nous avons acheté à la pâtisserie...	75	____
7.	Vos nouvelles amies sont très belles.....	66	____
8.	Après le souper, Serge essuie la vaisselle.....	61	____
9.	Il y a des jeunes qui sont très paresseux le samedi matin.....	50	____
10.	Le plus petit enfant est un Américain.....	62	____
11.	Après le combat, les boxeurs ont chaud.....	86	____
12.	Nancy obtient une bonne note de son professeur...	76	____
13.	Le bébé s'amuse avec une balle et des blocs.....	59	____
14.	Le voyageur a laissé ses valises sur le banc.....	67	____
	Part 2.- Time of Action. The student is asked whether the action described in a sentence took place in the past, present or future.		
15.	Il travaille fort.....	77	____
16.	Paul va organiser une soirée.....	66	____
17.	Le professeur chantera pendant le spectacle.....	45	____
18.	Le garçon reçoit une nouvelle bicyclette.....	58	____
19.	Nous servirons un repas italien.....	45	____
20.	La souris sort de son trou.....	67	____
21.	Le chien a mangé l'os.....	60	____
22.	Il jouait au football tous les jours.....	33	____
23.	Il n'a pas appris sa leçon.....	54	____
24.	Jeanne vendra ses livres.....	54	____
25.	Il faisait chaud avec ce manteau.....	28	____
26.	Il va repartir après la tempête.....	67	____
27.	Le touriste a vu la ville.....	56	____
28.	Savez-vous les règles du jeu d'échecs?.....	53	____

No.	Test content	Percent Correct O.B.E.	School

Part 3.- Sound discrimination. The student hears four word groups with only slightly different pronunciations and chooses the one which matches the object in the drawing.

29.	pain	80	
30.	cage	87	
31.	feu	93	
32.	les oeufs	88	
33.	dessert	42	
34.	sel	79	
35.	les pins	74	
36.	des mains	90	

Part 4.- Passages and social situations. The student hears a passage, a description or a conversation, and then is asked a question or questions about it. The material heard is of varying lengths. Four possible answers are given.

37.	Que peux-tu dire à Charles en ce grand jour?	36	
38.	Qu'est-ce que Marc emprunte?	46	
39.	Que fait Paul? (concert)	44	
40.	Qu'est-ce qu'elle lui dira? (accident)	41	
41.	Maintenant, combien reste-t-il de stéréos dans la vitrine?	42	
	Camping trip		
42.	Combien de temps cette excursion durera-t-elle?	53	
43.	Où coucheront-ils?	57	
44.	Comment voyageront-ils?	70	
	Weather forecast		
45.	Quel temps fait-il?	41	
46.	Quelles sont les prédictions pour la fin de l'après-midi?	45	
47.	Qu'arrive-t-il au thermomètre?	39	
	Basketball		
48.	Où est né James Naismith?	79	
49.	Qui, du collège de Springfield, a inventé le ballon-panier?	26	
50.	Qu'est-ce qui a déterminé la hauteur des paniers?	64	
51.	Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait pour honorer James Naismith?	64	
	Map		
52.	Où couchera-t-il, ce soir-là?	27	
53.	Où mange-t-il?	21	
54.	A quelle intersection Gaston rencontrera-t-il son ami Pierre?	27	
55.	A part la rue Collège, quelle autre rue doit-il prendre?	66	

Appendix C

The Indices of Discrimination

INDICES OF DISCRIMINATION

Item Number	Index	Item Number	Index
1	21.5*	29	23.0
2	7.6*	30	24.0
3	38.4	31	15.8*
4	45.4	32	28.0
5	36.9	33	33.4
6	31.7	34	29.7
7	42.8	35	28.4
8	19.0	36	22.2*
9	36.1	37	38.2
10	29.0	38	46.1
11	25.5	39	30.9
12	24.5	40	43.1
13	52.8	41	48.5
14	47.1	42	43.1
15	43.1	43	52.7
16	52.3	44	48.3
17	43.4	45	40.9
18	36.6	46	45.5
19	30.6	47	42.6
20	48.8	48	34.9
21	61.5	49	25.7
22	16.3	50	29.2
23	35.8	51	49.5
24	47.5	52	20.7
25	10.3	53	13.5
26	47.5	54	25.2
27	59.2	55	44.8
28	48.3		

* Items having mean scores > 88%